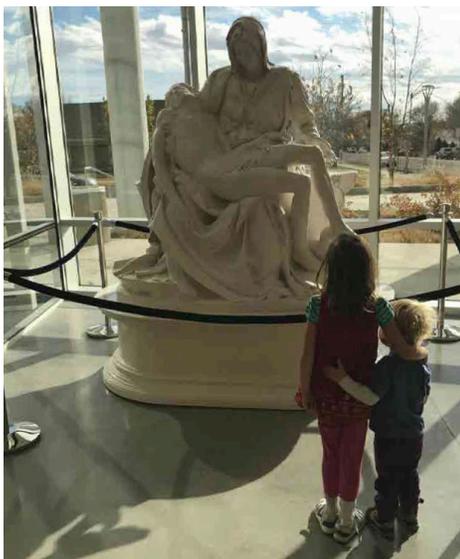


Michelangelo's "Pieta" Replica on USUE

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A replica of the "Pieta" is displayed in the lobby of the CIB.

Hundreds of thousands of people travel to Rome each year to see the Colosseum, St. Peter's Basilica and the Pantheon. The culmination the Vatican tour ends with viewing what many argue as Michelangelo's best work, the Pietà (pronounced p#-#-'tä). This 500-year-old marble sculpture of Mary holding the crucified body of her son, Christ, is breathtaking on many levels. A rare opportunity to see an exact replica of the Pietà is available to without airfare or the exhausting trip to Rome.

Local businessmen, Mark Morley and Jared Haddock, spearheaded bringing an authorized marble cast of the Renaissance statue to Utah State University's campus.

The story of how a Pieta replica came to Price began when Morley and his family traveled to Rome to visit a foreign exchange student. They visited Vatican City. Seeing the Pieta was an unexpected highlight, "I was honestly moved to tears when I saw it and I'm not an art person," said Tasha Morley.

Her husband, Mark, had similar feelings, "Michelangelo sculpted it in such a way that it looks soft. It evokes a lot of emotion. It's breathtaking," he said.

Years later, Morley came into contact with the foundry that owns the official rights from the Vatican to replicate the Pietà. He remembered the way that he felt looking at the original, and was driven to find a way to bring a replica to Utah.

But, securing a replica of one of the world's most famous sculptures was not an easy undertaking. There are 100-authorized-marble replicas in the world and more will not be created because the Vatican is not granting any new rights. The copies are full-sized, extremely expensive and obviously require a large building for display. Morley enlisted one of his friends and colleagues, Jared Haddock, in the effort. As director of a nonprofit organization called, Vertex, Haddock threw his time and connections into the project.

For Haddock, he felt a personal connection to the artwork. "I have lost a son and felt something when I looked at this sculpture. I felt for Mary's sacrifice losing her child. The neatest thing to me was to realize that while Christ was hanging on the cross, in the greatest agony, his thoughts were to his mother. It was important to him to make sure that his apostle John took care of his mother even though he was in pain. She knew that he loved her. I was in total agony when I lost my child, It comforted me to see that in the sculpture... Mary looks like she understands why her son died."

When Morley and Haddock secured the Pieta replica, they did not know exactly where to house it. As alumni, they both wanted to see it displayed at USUE. Time constraints did not allow for long-range planning; they had to find a location in one day. If the university declined, they had a backup plan.

"As the statue was loaded onto the truck we called the Chancellor Joe Peterson. It was the day of his father's funeral. He answered the call and gladly accepted the offer," Haddock explained. Within hours it was on display in the Central Instruction Building's foyer adjacent to Gallery East.

"It is an amazing piece of artwork. I thought it would give an opportunity to give extended exposure to a significant piece of art. It was practical for the people who owned the art and it was practical for us," Peterson said.

~ Renee Banasky